

T³: Trustee Training Tips

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HOW MUCH DO YOU KEEP?

Each month trustees receive a significant amount of information: minutes from the previous meeting, financial reports, circulation reports, director's report, possibly other reports from key staff, branches, etc. And these are just the standard ones that appear every month. Then there are the occasional ones: policy revision recommendations, long-range plans, budget proposals, etc. It can add up to a mountain of paper in a very short time. So, just how much of this "stuff" do you really need to keep? What can you throw away? And when can you toss it?

Nowhere in statute will one find anything about personal record retention. Your library is required to keep certain documents for specific periods of time, some being forever, but not so for individual trustees. *The following is merely a recommendation for individual board members—not the library;* if you chose to keep things longer, and you have the room to store them, then keep whatever you wish as long as you want.

- Keep for entire board term(s):
 - Kentucky Public Library Trustee Manual
 - By-laws for your library
 - Board Policy Manual for your library
 - Library Policy Manual for your library
 - Audits
 - T3: Trustee Training Tips
- Keep for fiscal year; dispose of previous year in July:
 - Minutes
 - Monthly financial reports
 - Monthly circulation report
 - 12-Month Agenda
 - Annual action plan (part of Long-Range Plan)
- Keep while current; until superseded:
 - Long-Range Plan
 - Annual Report for your library
 - Regional Statistical Report (if one exists)
 - Statistical Report of Kentucky Public Libraries (board presidents only receive this)
- Keep current year and previous year:
 - Approved annual operating budget
- Keep miscellaneous items while useful:
 - Director's Report
 - Proposed changes until made official

501(c)(3)...AGAIN

Every so often the question arises about the public library's IRS status for tax deductible donations. Many would be donors wish to know if the library is a 501(c)(3) and some libraries start to think they need this designation. *Your library is a political subdivision of the state* and, as such, is a 170(c)(1) by IRS definition. FYI: 501(c)(3) is a charitable organization, so unless you want to give away your books instead of lending them....

If your concern is the deductibility of donations to your library, donations to any government organization meet the IRS definition of a "charitable contribution" to a "qualified organization." No application to the IRS is needed. According to the IRS publication on Charitable Contributions (Publication #526): "To become qualified organizations, most organizations other than churches and governments, as described below, must apply to the IRS." The publication goes on to define as one type of "qualifying organization" *any state or any of its subdivisions* that perform substantial government functions. A public library established and operated according to Kentucky Statutes clearly meets that definition.

Because Kentucky public libraries can retain custody of gifts and donations, and are "qualified organizations" for the purpose of deductibility of donations, it is not necessary or desirable for a library board to seek 501(c)(3) status for the public library itself.

A separate library foundation or a Friends Chapter may have certain benefits, including greater political independence. Establishing either normally requires the assistance of a lawyer. A lawyer and/or accountant may also be needed to comply with the IRS 501(c)(3) filing requirements for a nonprofit foundation or Friends Chapter.

7 ATTRIBUTES OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE BOARD PRESIDENTS

The position of board president is one that requires special skills that not every trustee will possess, so it is more important that you select a person who has the skills needed. Following is a list of the attributes of a highly effective library board president:

- ① The ability to run a meeting fairly, efficiently, and effectively. This includes the ability to keep the board on task, prevent domination of the board by a minority of members, and encourage participation by all board members
- ② A good understanding of library services, the library budget, and library issues and problems.
- ③ The ability to develop and maintain a good working relationship with the other library board members, as well as a close partnership with the library director.
- ④ The ability to be an effective spokesperson for the library and the library board.
- ⑤ The ability to lead the board in problem-solving and lead the library toward better service to the community.
- ⑥ The ability and willingness to counsel other board members when there are issues or problems with one or more board members.
- ⑦ The ability and willingness to develop political relationships with key municipal and county government officials.

The successful functioning of a library board and the success of a library depends, to a significant extent, on the knowledge and the abilities of the board president. For this reason, it is important to select the best person for the job, rather than to just give everyone a turn at being the leader.

ARE YOU UP TO STANDARD?

The *Kentucky Public Library Standards* document is now in its second edition. While some of the standards have not changed, others have been updated to accommodate needed changes. Standards are provided for a broad range of factors and criteria to determine library service quality, including governance and administration, staffing, collection and resources, services, facilities, technology, and marketing.

The latest edition of the *Standards* offers a comprehensive means to evaluate the services, resources, and other requirements for basic library service that should be available to all residents of your county. The public library standards are entirely voluntary, but every library is encouraged to strive to offer the highest level of service possible.

As in the previous edition, the *Standards* are established at three levels: essential, enhanced, and exemplary. Each library can establish service targets by selecting an appropriate level of effort to apply to each standard, or use the levels to plan for progressive improvements over time.

The *Standards* document provides a useful tool in a library board's planning process. At a minimum, the checklists can be reviewed periodically to determine that the library meets at least a basic level of service, that its policies and programs meet statutory requirements for library service, that its staff are adequately equipped and trained to provide service to the community, and that its policies and procedures do not have errors or omissions that pose liabilities to the library or community.

Libraries meeting each of the three levels will be recognized at the KPLA Conference in April in Bowling Green. Will your library be one?

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Even our smallest communities are growing and seeing new people move in and seek to make themselves an active part of their new hometowns. Perhaps just such a person has been or soon will be appointed to the library board. One way to welcome and help him/her get acclimated quickly is to provide a written biographical sketch of each trustee and the library director.

What to include? For starters, time served on the library board, offices held, occupation, college affiliation, family (spouse, children or pets), special interests in relation to library issues, and special interests period (aka hobbies). Be sure each trustee is comfortable with what's included and knows it is to be shared. Also include contact information, including phone number and e-mail address to be used for library related communication.

Seasoned board members may learn something new about each other, further cementing the board bond or camaraderie. And, you might want to include your Regional Consultant in the mix as well.

T³:Trustee Training Tips is published quarterly by the Field Services Division of the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives. Correspondence should be addressed to the editor, Nelda Moore, at Lincoln Trail Regional Office, 201 Cathedral Manor, Suite One, Bardstown 40004-1250. Phone 502.348.8181; Fax 502.348.8182; email: nelda.moore@ky.gov.

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LIBRARY LETTERS

Dear Marian Librarian,

Page One says we don't have to keep everything we are given for board meetings, but it doesn't say how to dispose of them. Should they be shredded?

-- Troubled Trustee

Dear Troubled,

What you are given at meetings or, ideally, sent ahead of time in your packets, are all public records and, consequently, there is nothing wrong with merely tossing them in your wastebasket. However, there is also nothing wrong with running them through a shredder, and that would be the more prudent action to take. Much of what you are given is not in its final form, some of it may be incorrect and replaced later with corrected copies, etc. The rule of thumb to use is: if someone found this would it give them inaccurate information and potentially embarrass the library?

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LIBRARY STATS

👍 Nine times as many people entered Kentucky public libraries as attended men's and women's basketball and men's football games (2006 season) at UK, U of L, KSU, EKU, WKU, and Morehead State combined.

👍 The cost per person for new material acquired by all Kentucky public libraries in 2006 (\$3.55) was three dollars less than the average admission price to a single movie in the U.S. (\$6.55).

👍 Over 665 thousand students were enrolled in Kentucky's elementary or secondary schools or were home schooled. More than ten times as many juvenile fiction and non-fiction books were circulated last year from our public libraries (7,252,568).

